

Public Notice – Environmental Project

PURPOSE OF NOTICE:

The Department of Environmental Quality seeks public comment on the state's response to the environmental aspects of a proposed project located in Accomack County, Virginia.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

September 4, 2009 to October 2, 2009

TYPE OF RESPONSE:

Federal Consistency Determination

DEQ is reviewing a federal action to determine if it is consistent with the U.S. Coastal Zone Management Act. The act seeks to protect the quality of air, water or other natural resources in Virginia's coastal area.

NAME OF AGENCY PROPOSING THE PROJECT:

U.S Army Corps of Engineers

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Onancock River consists of a channel 200 feet wide and 12 feet deep across Onancock Bar. The navigation channel maintains a minimum width of 100 feet to a point roughly 1,200 feet above the mouth of the North Branch, with widening at the upper end to form a 200 foot square turning basin. The turning basin is approximately 2.3 acres in size with a depth of 12 feet deep and 100 feet wide in the lower 500 feet of Joynes Branch, with an anchorage basin 3.9 acres in size at the mouth of Titlow Creek.

Dredging of the federal channel and turning basins is necessary to continue safe navigation in the Onancock River. The Onancock River lies within Accomack County on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and is a mesohaline tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The Onancock River provides important spawning, nursery and/or forage habitat to a wide array of marine and estuarine fauna. A large variety of fish species using the Onancock River have important commercial and recreational importance.

The Onancock River Federal Navigation project was last dredged in early 1963, when approximately 196,000 cubic yards (cy) were removed. The channel was realigned in recent years to postpone the need for dredging and to reduce the quantities should dredging ever be required. However, since 1963, an estimated 110,000 cy of material has accumulated in the federal channels and turning basins. The current alignment requires maintenance dredging.

Previously used placement sites for the dredge material are no longer available and new sites must be identified and developed. The preferred alternative includes a combination of overboard placement along a series of offshore sandbars and upland placement for fine-grained silts and clays. The proposed overboard placement area offers a viable option to place dredged material in an area that should not affect the bathymetry and littoral transport and will create additional protection of shallow water habitats. The mostly fine-grained silts and clays found in the interior portions of the channel will be placed in an upland confined placement area.

A federal consistency determination has been submitted for this proposal which finds it consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Virginia Coastal Resources Management Program (VCP).

HOW TO COMMENT:

DEQ accepts comments from the public by e-mail, fax or postal mail. All comments must include the name, address and telephone number of the person commenting and be received by DEQ within the comment period. The public may review the project documents at DEQ's Central Office in Richmond.

CONTACT FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS, DOCUMENT REQUESTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

NAME;	Anne N. Pinion DEQ Central Office, 6 th Floor Office of Environmental Impact Review 629 East Main Street Richmond, Virginia, 23219
Phone:	(804) 698-4488
Fax:	(804) 698-4319
E-mail:	anne.pinion@deq.virginia.gov